



**United States Department of Justice  
United States Attorney's Office  
District of Minnesota**

**B. Todd Jones,  
United States Attorney**

David Anderson, Public Affairs Specialist  
(612) 664-5684; cell: (612) 730-2251

# **News Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Wednesday, Sept. 23, 2009  
[WWW.USDOJ.GOV/USAO/MN](http://WWW.USDOJ.GOV/USAO/MN)

## **Side Lake man indicted for growing more than 1,000 marijuana plants**

A federal grand jury has returned an indictment against a 49-year-old Side Lake, Minnesota, man for allegedly growing more than 1,000 marijuana plants with the intent to sell the marijuana. The indictment, filed today in federal court, charges Thorsten Gorham Otterness with one count of manufacturing marijuana, one count of using and maintaining premises for manufacturing marijuana, and one count of possession with intent to distribute marijuana.

Otterness allegedly maintained a marijuana farm near Side Lake, which is a rural community north of Hibbing, Minnesota. On that farm, Otterness allegedly grew the plants subject to this case during the summer of 2009. Officers from the Boundary Waters Drug Task Force spotted the grow operation from the air on September 10, 2009, after which they executed a state search warrant at Otterness's residence. Otterness was immediately arrested.

If convicted, Otterness faces a potential maximum penalty of life in prison on the manufacturing and possession count and 20 years in prison on the using and maintaining premises count. All sentences are determined by a federal district court judge.

This case is the result of an investigation by the Boundary Waters Drug Task Force and the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. It is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Thomas M. Hollenhorst.

Questions regarding this press release should be directed to Jeanne Cooney, Director of Community Relations, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (612) 664-5611 (office) or (651) 757-7567 (cell).

-30-

An indictment is a determination by a grand jury that there is probable cause to believe that offenses have been committed by a defendant. A defendant, of course, is presumed innocent until he or she pleads guilty or is proven guilty at trial.